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ABSTRACT

This report shows how and why state governments must take the lead in solving the debilitating problems of high risk youth. These young persons will fail to become productive citizens without special interventions to improve their educational, occupational, and social skills. The basic problem is defined and research on effective responses is summarized. State governments are in the best position to provide coherent, coordinated policies for the development of these interventions. Substantial funding is a must. As states gain influence over federal dollars which support services for at risk youth, and as they provide local funding for youth services, they can assemble substantial legal and fiscal tools to provide services which few municipalities could create. Obstacles, such as the lack of interest by political leaders, have impeded progress in this area. Some recent initiatives have been successful. They have the following characteristics in common: (1) a state level coordinating mechanism; (2) incentives for local participation and creative leveraging of state resources; and (3) encouragement of local creativity within well-crafted guidelines. (VM)

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State Governments and At-Risk Youth: The Critical Link

by Richard H. deLone

Fall 1987

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Public/Private Ventures is a national, not-for-profit corporation that designs, manages and evaluates social policy initiatives designed to help those whose lack of preparation for the workforce hampers their chances for productive lives. Its work is supported by funds from both the public and private sectors.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report argues that state governments can and must take the lead in solving the growing, debilitating and seemingly intractable problem of youth "at risk"--the high number of young people who lack the educational, occupational and social skills required to become productive citizens.

The report defines the basic problem, summarizes the research on effective responses and makes the case that the problem cannot be solved without strong inititatives led by state governments. Examples of modest but effective youth initiatives in four states are reviewed, with an eye toward how they overcame the obstacles to effective state action.

BACKGROUND

By conservative estimates, one in five youth is at risk. Demographic projections suggest that this proportion will grow as the size of youth cohorts shrinks, raising the twin specters of a serious national labor shortage and a large population on welfare.

There is a paucity of well-conducted research on effective programs to serve at-risk youth, but some key principles are clear:

- o No single agency can do the job and no single program approach is sufficient; programs that combine approaches are required.
- o Programs of longer duration are likely to produce more lasting effects.
- o Sequences of services, tailored to age, are required.
- o Services targeting the neediest youth have the strongest payoff.
- o School dropout prevention and improved school achievement are essential program goals.
- o High quality program design, staff and operations plus stable funding are critical success factors.

These principles underscore the importance of developing effective serving systems that are capable of producing integrated, sequential and systematic programming strategies. Currently, programming efforts in most communities are characterized by single, separate services, often of short

duration, which are applied by a variety of agencies in a disjointed fashion.

THE STATE ROLE

Treating the problems of at-risk youth with fragmentary local services--even good services--is a prescription for failure. State government is best-positioned to provide the antidote--a coherent, coordinated policy and programming strategy. Unless programs for at-risk youth receive substantial new funding, which appears improbable, improved strategies for using existing resources (which require improved public management and incentives at the state level) offer the only promising response.

In recent years, states have gained considerable influence over the federal dollars that are the primary support of many services for at-risk youth, such as education, employment, health, and juvenile justice. States directly fund many youth services (education being paramount) and bear primary responsibility for the legal and regulatory framework within which local governments deliver these services. Some states operate youth services directly. Thus, states have vast but generally latent potential to design, initiate and guide coherent and comprehensive strategies for serving at-risk youth.

In addition to having these considerable legal and fiscal tools, states are well-positioned to "convene" local youth service agencies controlled by diverse local jurisdictions. Without the intervention of an extraorganizational convener, few localities are able to take the critical step of bringing the right parties to the table to develop coherent local strategies.

LESSONS FROM EXPERIENCE

States face formidable obstacles in crafting coherent strategies for serving at-risk youth. While there are signs of change, state political leaders have generally shown little interest in this powerless and hard-to-serve constituency. There are few incentives for top state officials to give high priority to the development of statewide interagency youth initiatives. Fragmentary data bases, turf rivalries, structural barriers to interagency coordination, limited time horizons and local animosity toward state activism are among the significant barriers states must overcome in fulfilling their potential for assuming a leadership role.

However, recent initiatives in Oregon, California, Massachusetts and Connecticut have produced modest but significant results. Despite the considerable diversity of these efforts, common themes emerged that appear to be critical to their success. These include both organizational and programmatic principles that together constitute a framework for effectiveness.

Organizationally, successful state initiatives appear to require the following:

1) A state-level coordinating mechanism;

2) Incentives for local participation and creative leveraging of state resources; and

3) Encouragement of local creativity within well-crafted guidelines.

While a precise programming strategy depends on individual state and local needs, five broad programming approaches merit particular attention. These are:

1) Increased use of schools as centers for integrated human service delivery;

2) Development of more appropriate basic educational offerings for youth at risk--a need obscured by most recent education reforms;

3) Year-round programming to prevent summer learning loss, a major source of educational retardation for at-risk youth;

4) Strengthened capacity to provide basic academic skills to out-of-school youth; and

5) Development of an institutional capacity to provide comprehensive services to out-of-school youth.

Collectively, the state initiatives reviewed in this paper illustrate practical steps that states can take to organize effectively and stimulate local programming consonant with effective approaches. Important issues include the critical role of intermediary organizations of neutral staff who belong to no agency and are dedicated to brokering collaborative approaches that meet the goals of all; the importance of middle managers to an to effective collaboration; more effective use of existing discretionary dollars to seed initiatives; use of matching fund requirements; a high degree of state/local interaction; and emphasis on fast development of programs (not reports).

While the initiatives reviewed in the report are promising and indicate directions for future state action, they are also very modest in scale. Strong and sustained leadership by governors, chief state school officers, legislators and others will be required to mount efforts whose scale and sophistication are adequate to meet the needs of at-risk youth.

I. INTRODUCTION

> Scholars, critics and some elected officials have tried to warn us of a developing underclass of poor, unskilled, uneducated, angry young people. By and large, their warnings have been ignored.[1]

The 1980s have seen increasing concern about the poor prospects that large numbers of American youth have for participating and achieving in American society. This concern is easily justified: increasing numbers of youth are growing up in poverty, educational achievement scores for large numbers of students are frighteningly low, the family is in disarray, unemployment rates for minority youth are reaching new heights and teenage birth rates are still nearly twice as high as those in other developed nations. Even as both the absolute and relative numbers of young people entering the labor force are declining, the proportion who are minority and low-income, and thus most "at risk," is rising.[2] It is well-documented that a severe shortage of qualified new workers is likely in the 1990s; many local and regional economies --and thus the national economy--face serious challenges to economic growth because of this expected shortage.

Some observers have concluded that dramatic new directions in public policy are required. Among their recommendations are vouchers or other forms of individual entitlement to introduce competition among educational and other services for at-risk youth; legislated requirements that local government serve at-risk youth with special programs, as they do for special education students; and entirely new institutional arrangements, such as the German system of near-universal apprenticeships for non-college youth.[3]

The introduction of such visionary changes may have merit; however, this paper makes the more modest proposal that bringing more youth into the mainstream of our society is possible <u>if</u> two largely missing elements are brought into play. The first

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[1] Dr. Bernard J. Watson, "President's Message," **William Penn Foundation Annual Report**. 1985.

[2] See, for example, Harold Hodgkinson, **All One System**. Washington, D.C.: Institute for Educational Leadership, Inc., 1985.

[3] William J. Spring, "Youth Unemployment and the Transition from School to Work: Programs in Boston, Frankfurt and London," **New England Economic Review**, March/April 1987, pp. 3-16.

element, the missing actor, is state government, which has vast potential for improving services to at-risk youth. The second element, the missing ingredient, is a coherent programmatic and management strategy, which state government is uniquely positioned to provide.

Most state governments have the means and the opportunity to assume leadership in serving at-risk youth--often without passing a single new bill or appropriating an additional dollar (though both steps may, in fact, be desirable). In addition, states have greater potential than any other level of government to initiate and carry through the coordinated policies and programming strategies that are required. States provide much of the funding for education, juvenile justice, child welfare and other youth services; they have considerable discretionary control over local expenditure of federal funds for youth and possess critical legal and regulatory powers to set policies that govern local programming.

However, many state governments, if not most, have been passive in the face of the mounting youth crisis. With the exception of recent educational reforms, which have almost universally failed to address the education of at-risk youth, one is hard-pressed to cite instances in which youth concerns of any kind have been a major issue for governors or state legislators. Here and there, states have supported drug and alcohol abuse programs or efforts to reform the juvenile justice system, but most state governments have either ignored at-risk youth or been content to pass on targeted federal funds to localities.

Human concerns aside, there are economic imperatives that will eventually force greater state attention to at-risk youth. The economic argument is straightforward: states must have a strong economic base to generate tax revenues and promote the well-being of their residents. Correlatively, states have a strong stake in reducing welfare budgets. If large numbers of young persons grow into unemployed adults, economic development will be retarded and welfare and related costs will rise. Welfare-related costs are already in the hundreds of billions of dollars nationally (if taxpayer costs and lost productivity are combined),[4] and demographic projections suggest they will rise further.

Simple and persuasive as these arguments are, they have not yet translated into a sense of urgency in most states. But there are positive signs. In addition to the handful of state youth initiatives reviewed in this paper, the past year has seen at least a half-dozen governors appoint task forces to consider the

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[4] See, for example, Henry Levin, **The Educationally Disadvantaged: A National Crisis.** Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures, 1985.

issue. Such state government interest groups as the National Governors' Association, the Education Commission of the States and the National Council of Chief State School Officers have developed committees to address the issue, and a number of states have developed dropout prevention initiatives.

This growing interest at the state level will ultimately fill a political as well as a programming vacuum. Through the 1970s, the politics of youth programs cast the federal government in the roles of funder and policy leader, and cast local governments in the role of service deliverer. But the coming of the Reagan administration and its "new federalism," combined with a massive federal budget deficit and bipartisan disillusionment with federal social programs, has made it unlikely that the federal government will play a major leadership and funding role in youth programming in the foreseeable future.

The states' efforts with regard to at-risk youth are tied to two current "reform" movements. One, the "educational excellence" movement, which has in many ways been led by state governors, has resulted in stiffer academic and graduation requirements. While these requirements may challenge academically talented students, they offer little to at-risk youth who lack basic mathematics and reading skills. Many experts and some governors have expressed concern that the "excellence" movement could result in higher dropout rates if the learning deficiencies of at-risk youth are not addressed with equal commitment.

The other relevant movement is welfare reform. Here, state concerns and the needs of at-risk youth are more compatible. Frustrated by the inability of current welfare policies--including work requirements and "workfare" programs--to keep large numbers of recipients off the rolls, officials in many states have begun to target education, employment and other services to young welfare recipients. Such efforts are intended to prevent long-term welfare dependency, with its high individual and social costs. The apparent effectiveness of coordinated services to welfare recipients in programs like the Massachusetts ET Choices program, where 86 percent of participants were off the relief rolls a year later, has provided empirical encouragement for more comprehensive and coordinated programming at the state level.[5]

The further convergence of economic, political and social trends should produce continued growth in state governments' concern for at-risk youth. Since states already have much of the de jure and de facto responsibility for dealing with many youth and consider-

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[5] Todd Rofuth, "Moving Clients into Jobs: Pennsylvania and Massachusetts Take Conservative and Liberal Approaches to a Common Problem," **Public Welfare**, Spring 1987, pp. 10-21.

able control over the resources used for them, the issue that must be addressed immediately is how states can do a better job of directing, managing and coordinating the resources that are already available for at-risk youth.

II. DIMENSIONS AND CHALLENGES

The adjective "at-risk" has been borrowed from epidemiology to define youth who face a high probability of unemployment, economic dependency, and various manifestations of antisocial behavior and personal disorganization in their adult lives. Youth are at risk because they lack (and appear unlikely to acquire on their own) the basic competencies and credentials that research has shown to be strongly associated with a successful transition from high school to college or the work force. Among the factors that predict high risk are poor grades and low test scores, a combination of poor school performance and lack of work experience, low school attendance, and teenage pregnancy. These factors are most prevalent among low-income students, vastly disproportionate numbers of whom come from minority families, and the problem is often compounded by teenage drug or alcohol abuse, other health problems, court involvement and dysfunctional family life. In short, at-risk youth typically need a lot of change--and a lot of help--in a lot of areas.

The process of acquiring skills and credentials is not simple; rather, it is tied to the larger process of human development, which is typically complex and unpredictable and is notoriously subject to its own timetable. Accordingly, one-shot, single-treatment, short-term programs are rarely effective for at-risk youth. The research points to the need for a package of continuous services that are customized to the needs of individuals in a context that provides challenge, incentives and rewards for performance. While youth need help, they also need palpable reasons to believe their efforts will open up opportunities and produce results. Legitimate achievement is a major ingredient in the process of mainstreaming.

Since risk is a matter of degree and some youth who exhibit risk factors succeed anyway (e.g., some dropouts get good jobs and some teenage mothers go to college), it is difficult to estimate how many youth are actually at risk and how many will ultimately end up unemployed or not in the labor force. Gross data suggest that 20 percent is a reasonable estimate of the proportion of the population at risk, with variations among communities that depend primarily on the percentage of youth in the community living in poverty.[6] A useful summary measure is the percentage between 18 and 24 year old who are "inactive," i.e., not in school, the military or the work force. Approximately one in five youth are

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[6] Andrew Sum, Paul Harrington, and Bill Goedicke. **One-fifth of the Nation's Teenagers: Employment Problems of Poor Teenagers in America, 1981-85.** Boston: Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, 1986.

inactive; the highest inactivity rates are among nonwhite males (about 28 percent) and nonwhite females (about 44 percent). In the past 20 years, the rate has nearly doubled for white males and more than doubled for nonwhite males, while holding constant for nonwhite females and declining somewhat for white females.[7]

The rising inactivity rate suggests that it is increasingly difficult for youth to assume and fulfill responsible adult roles in our society. Furthermore, the rise in inactivity is accompanied by other trends that seem to reinforce the problem. The national school dropout rate is currently near 14 percent, which is up slightly over the past decade.[8] In 1983, there were 500,000 live births and more than 1 million pregnancies in the United States reported among women younger than 20. Although birth rates have declined for teenagers as a whole, they are increasing for unmarried teenagers and have barely declined for very young teenagers--two groups at particularly high risk of negative health, educational, and social outcomes.[9]

Youth crime rates are also troubling. About two-thirds of all arrests for property crimes and one-half of all violent crime arrests involve suspects under 25 years of age. In all, 5.1 million youth were arrested in 1985.[10] Finally, the number of youth with the disadvantage of a low-income background is growing. The percentage of sixteen- to nineteen-year-olds living in poor families increased from 14.9 percent in 1981 to 19.3 percent in 1985. By 1985, approximately one of every five teenagers was living with an impoverished family, and nearly 29 percent were living with poor or near-poor families.[11]

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[7] Bureau of Labor Statistics and Congressional Budget Office Data in National Research Council, **Youth Employment and Training Programs: The YEDPA Years.** Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1985, p. 47.

[8] National Center for Education Statistics, **The Condition of Education.** Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1985.

[9] U.S. General Accounting Office, **Teenage Pregnancy: 500,000 Births a Year but Few Tested Programs.** Washington, D.C.: U.S. GAO, 1986.

[10] James R. Wetzel, **American Youth: A Statistical Snapshot.** Washington, D.C.: William T. Grant Foundation Commission on Youth and America's Future, 1987.

[11] Andrew Sum, Paul Harrington and Bill Goedicke. **One-fifth of the Nation's Teenagers: Employment Problems of Poor Youth in America, 1981-1985.** Boston: Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, 1986.

Demographic projections indicate that the number of youth at risk will continue to rise through the next several decades. Nonwhite youth, who are disproportionately poor and at risk, currently account for about one-sixth of the youth population; by the year 2000, they are expected to account for one-third.[12]

These data are indicators of the problem, but do not explain the root causes. While it is clear that poor school performance reduces chances of getting a job and that poverty can be correlated with poor school performance, it is not clear why dropout rates have leveled off after a century-long decline, why poverty is spreading (beyond the effects of changes in income transfer policies), or why youth inactivity rates are rising. Large social, political and economic shifts are underway and there are numerous theories on the causes. The most plausible theory is that the transformation to a service-based economy requires higher levels of education and social skills, even in low-skill, low-pay jobs, than did the manufacturing economy that preceded it. If this theory is correct, youth need more education and have less incentive to obtain it, since appropriate vehicles for acquiring the type of education needed may not be available.

The dynamics of the changes occurring among youth are not clearly understood. But even without fully understanding or being able to alter the larger forces, it is possible to help substantial numbers of at-risk youth through more intelligent management of existing resources in programs and settings that help develop both the skills and the motivation necessary for successful adult lives. There is clear evidence that youth with adequate basic academic skills, a high school diploma and a history of work experience are able to obtain employment as easily as older workers.[13]

THE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT CHALLENGE

Our knowledge of programs and interventions to enhance the development and improve the economic chances of at-risk youth is imperfect. While there have been numerous evaluations of education, job training and social service programs for youth, few have been methodologically rigorous. The result has been a modest number of insights and little convincing evidence of effectiveness.

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[12] Gregory A. Spencer, "Projections of the Population of the United States, by Age, Sex, and Race, 1983-2080." **Current Population Survey**, 1984.

[13] Robert H. Meyer and David A. Wise, "High School Preparation and Early Labor Force Experience," **The Youth Employment Problem--Dimensions, Causes, and Consequences.** Washington, D.C.: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1980.

Nonetheless, there are specific program models and, more important, programming principles that have reasonable research validation, widespread endorsement of knowledgeable practitioners and common sense to recommend them. As summarized by a recent study by Public/Private Ventures,[14] these are:

1. No single program approach can solve all youth unemployment problems. The complexities of the problems and the limitation of programming knowledge probably rule out the discovery of such a panacea in the future.

2. Programs with several service elements are more likely to produce results than single-service efforts. Thus, work experience, ineffective in itself, offers synergistic potential when offered with other program elements. A coherent array of programs is usually needed to serve the varying needs of a community's at-risk youth population.

3. Programs of longer duration are more likely to produce lasting effects. Likewise, actual length-of-stay in a program can usually be correlated with positive outcomes, a vexing issue in view of the generally high rates of attrition that even the best programs experience.

4. Youths' needs tend to follow a sequence by age; education-based services are usually most appropriate for younger youth, while labor market-oriented services (particularly skills training) are more appropriate for older youth.

5. Targeting program efforts to the neediest groups has strong and clear payoffs and is an essential element of a youth employment strategy.

6. Dropout prevention should be a pivotal aim of youth programming, which is troubling because knowledge on conducting effective in-school dropout prevention programs is sparse.

7. The quality of program design, staff and operations and the stability of program operations and funding over time are vital factors to program performance.

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[14] Thomas J. Smith, Gary Walker and Rachel A. Baker, **Youth and the Workplace: Second Chance Programs and the Hard-to-Employ.** Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures, 1987.

As P/PV adds, "many of these principles may seem self-evident today, (but) ten years ago they were not." The challenge to policy-makers and program managers alike is to create the conditions under which these basic principles can be applied. Note that the first five principles concern the development of effective youth-serving systems that make available a continuum of integrated service options and permit continuous programming of sufficient duration to affect individual development. Such systems require a sequence of age-appropriate services that target those who need them most.

In contrast, programming for at-risk youth in most communities today is anything but integrated, sequential and systematic. Instead, single services, often of short duration, are applied by a variety of agencies in a disjointed fashion. Target populations, reporting criteria, service areas and regulations differ from agency to agency and from funding stream to funding stream. Under such conditions, it is extremely difficult to develop the coordinated, comprehensive, continuous service delivery systems that are needed. The result is that dollars are often spent to produce either short-term gains that dissipate after the program ends or no gains at all.

Indeed, the fragmented nature of service delivery as it now exists is close to a design for failure because single services cannot address all needs that put youth at risk. If a student needs glasses, has a drinking problem or comes from a pathological family, the best education program in the world will not be enough. Similarly, if a dropout lacks the basic academic skills to succeed in a training program, the guarantee of a good job for all program graduates will not matter.

The need for coordinated service strategies is widely recognized. As the National Governors' Association (NGA) put it in a recent newsletter, there is growing awareness, particularly among the education and employment and training communities, that "the problems of at-risk youth, high dropout rates and illiteracy cannot be solved by any one group in isolation."[15] No agency has the necessary mandate or resources to do the whole job. NGA's Joan Wills observed, "It's difficult to develop a strategy around improvements to individuals when our entire governmental system, whether at federal, state or local levels, is organized around major functions,"[16] such as education, health, job training and welfare. This means, quite simply, that while government is part of the solution, the apparatus of government is part of the

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[15] National Governors' Association, **Labor Notes**, No. 10, November 21, 1986, p. 11.

[16] Speech delivered at **Public/Private Ventures States Seminar**, Philadelphia, February, 1986.

problem. It is the challenge of overcoming this problem that states are best positioned to address.

WHY STATES?

State government is uniquely positioned in the federal system to plan and implement the coordinative strategy required to get maximum benefit from the scatter of governmental programs and services for at-risk youth. States fund a major portion of youth services, with education, juvenile justice and welfare being paramount. States bear primary responsibility for the legal and regulatory framework within which local governmental entities, school districts and other agencies deliver many of these services. States are also legal guardians for many at-risk youth, such as abused and neglected children and juvenile delinquents. Some states operate youth-serving agencies in some localities (e.g., juvenile justice programs and facilities, regional vocational/technical schools, and various social services available through the welfare system) and states have varying degrees of control over how localities spend federal categorical dollars for youth. These responsibilities give states substantial means to:

- Frame policy and set broad priorities;
- Plan strategies for coordinated service delivery;
- Influence the practices of basic institutions with regard to at-risk youth; and
- Maintain continuity of efforts and establish quality controls.

The billions of dollars controlled by state governments include funds for categorical programs that target disadvantaged youth, such as Chapter I Federal Education Act funds, Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) 8 percent funds, and Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) health funds; for categorical programs that serve the disadvantaged but are not limited to youth, such as JTPA job training funds (40 percent of which are to be spent on youth) and welfare supports, including income maintenance and social services; and for basic youth services, including education. Not all these dollars can or should be devoted to at-risk youngsters, of course, but they are evidence that states control or influence an enormous pool of resources that can be used to develop youth initiatives.

A cursory review of how these funds are spent in most states reveals that often very little effort is expended to ensure that funds are used in accordance with the seven "best-practice" principles previously cited. Current resources, which are already inadequate, are not being optimally used.

Obviously, all levels of government should assume a role in developing a more coherent, better-coordinated policy for at-risk youth, and local government must ultimately manage or implement that policy in a competent manner if it is to be translated into effective programs. However, state government has a distinct advantage over other levels of government in establishing leadership in youth initiatives, since the state deals directly with the institutions that deliver services.

Leadership at the federal level would clearly be more difficult. The federal government provides only a small portion of the resources available to serve youth (though its share of categorical supports for the at-risk population is substantial) and it is difficult, verging on impossible, for the federal government to frame policy in a manner that is sensitive to the extraordinarily diverse needs and circumstances of individual states, not to mention the various communities, industries and inhabitants within each state. Arguably, the most useful approach the federal government can take without increasing the human capital development share of the federal budget is to allow states greater leeway in determining how best to use funds to meet legislative mandates, to ensure that some share of federal funds are targeted to at-risk youth, and to provide support for research on specific state-level approaches for dealing with at-risk youth.

To some extent, Congress has already begun to employ this approach by passing the Omnibus Budget and Reconciliation Act of 1981 (OBRA), the legislative centerpiece of the Reagan Administration's new federalism. OBRA, in conjunction with other legislation, gave state governments considerable flexibility and a stronger role in administering a number of federally funded social service programs. For example, while it strengthens work requirements for AFDC, OBRA also allows states to test a variety of workfare programs, as do the WIN Demonstration programs under Title IV-A of the Social Security Act. States were also granted fairly broad discretion in implementing EPSDT, an entitlement program jointly funded by state and federal governments that provides medical screening and treatment to youth under 18 who are from Medicaid-eligible families.

Similarly, the passage of JTPA gave states an unprecedented role in the administration of U.S. Department of Labor-funded job training programs. Under JTPA, governors designate local service delivery areas (SDAs), review the SDAs' plans (which they can reject, though they rarely do) and control 22 percent of JTPA dollars. In the spirit of OBRA, states have also been given power to write rules for use of Chapter I Education Act funds, the major federal support for education of the disadvantaged.

THE STATE AS CONVENER AND CATALYST

The advantage of state government as an administrator of youth services is not limited to its control of or influence over the expenditure of federal funds. Nor is it limited to the funding it provides, the laws and regulations it promulgates, or the responsibilities it has traditionally assumed for various groups of at-risk youth. Even when strong local initiative and performance have been demonstrated and state agencies have done little beyond passing through funds and monitoring compliance with laws and regulations, there is a strong rationale for the state to undertake policy initiatives.

First, state regulations, varying definitions of eligibility for service, and a hodgepodge of planning and reporting requirements often make it extremely difficult for localities to develop coherent systems for serving at-risk youth. The state is the level of government at which the administrative and legal complexities of coordinated programming can most efficiently be worked out.

Second, political subdivisions do not always lend themselves to service coordination. For example, social services may be delivered on a countywide basis; JTPA service delivery areas may be multicounty consortia; health services may be managed by a town or city; and education by a local school board with independent taxing authority and a boundary not coterminous with the other services. In such circumstances, an extraorganizational convener with clout is needed to get the right parties to the table to even begin discussing a coordinated approach to youth needs. The convener must also provide the fiscal, regulatory or other incentives for planning and implementing such an approach.

Finally, even in large cities where service and political jurisdictions are coterminous, the literature on coordination makes it clear that an extraorganizational force is usually needed. Before state government can convene localities to discuss coordinated planning and service delivery, however, it must first demonstrate the capacity for coordination itself. State-level agencies must show practical evidence that they are leading the way in the coordination of services.

III. LESSONS AND EXPERIENCE

Over the past few years, there has been increasing discussion at the state level about at-risk youth, including much rhetoric and several notable initiatives. We can expect more of the same in the foreseeable future. But what is there to inform or guide states in their efforts? Is there no technology or wisdom that can be passed on to states attempting to confront this difficult and multifaceted problem?

There are self-reported assessments, which one must take with the proverbial grain of salt. Most initiatives are too new to offer substantial lessons. There is a modest body of objective knowledge, however, from which we can learn methods of utilizing current resources in a more coordinated and effective fashion. This knowledge can be distilled into a group of management principles and programmatic strategies to help guide a state's initiative and improve its chances for effectiveness. They are derived in large part from the work of Public/Private Ventures in its State Employment Initiatives for Youth demonstration (SEIY), from P/PV's work with other states, and from the experience of several additional states with notable and well-reported initiatives.

Before exploring these principles and some states' experiences in implementing them, we should summarize the broad goals that any initiative must strive to accomplish. For while the precise mix of programs required will vary from state to state and community to community, the basic goals for effective services to at-risk youth are universally applicable. The ultimate goal, of course, is to provide youth with steady employment in jobs that yield adequate income, stability and growth for prolonged self-sufficiency. The key steps on the road to meeting this goal, which are both apparent to common sense and documented by research, are the following:

- Achievement of adequate basic academic skills;
- Attainment of basic educational credentials (at minimum, a high school diploma or its equivalent);
- Development of employability skills, i.e., the general knowledge, attitudes and behaviors needed to get and hold job;
- Development of vocational skills (either through classroom experience or on-the-job training); and

- o Accessibility of critical support services that enable individual youth to maintain the needed drive and direction to attain self-sufficiency.

These are broad goals that do not define specific actions. But they do identify the basic needs that any initiative should address with serious and substantial program components in order to maximize the number of youth it helps escape at-risk status.

STRATEGIES

While specific procedures will and should vary according to local conditions, strengthening of systems in most states entails attention to eight critical management and programming strategies. Adherence to these basic strategies and principles will ensure the comprehensive, targeted and coordinated programming that is necessary. The first five strategies involve activities that take place at the local level, but whose implementation would benefit greatly from state leadership in policy development, research and development support, and technical dissemination and communication. This type of initiative and support from a higher-level authority is necessary; however desirable, these strategies are difficult to undertake and carry out on a local basis without additional support and impetus. The remaining strategies require state implementation and are designed to ensure that the results of local strategies can be achieved through the state initiative.

1) Increased use of schools as centers for integrated human services

Many existing agencies and categorically funded programs are intended to serve approximately the same at-risk population. However, each typically has its own office space and outreach, recruitment and service delivery mechanisms. Not only is this inefficient and expensive, but, as the head of a national dropout prevention program puts it, it means that "kids need a Ph.D. in systems theory to figure out how to get help."[17]

There is considerable evidence that integrated human services are an effective dropout prevention component. An effective referral system, tied together by a school-based case manager, is one mechanism for integrating services; a better approach, however, is locating services in the schools. With recent declines in enrollment, many school systems have space available for in-school health clinics or outstationed staff from social service agencies. As we shall see, states can stimulate integrated services by offering fiscal or other incentives to localities

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[17] Remark made by William Milliker, president of Cities in Schools, Inc.

(using existing discretionary dollars), by initiating interagency agreements, and by stipulating via legislative/regulatory requirements that other agencies enter into joint service agreements with schools. In some instances, regulatory reform to eliminate barriers to joint services (e.g., facilities requirements, credentialling issues or confidentiality provisions) must also be addressed.

2) Development of more appropriate basic educational offerings for at-risk youth

Support services can eliminate barriers to student learning, but providing for learning itself is the responsibility of the school. Students typically experience a seemingly irreversible downward spiral of failed courses and flagging attendance before dropping out. Beyond extra counseling or a remedial class, however, too many students who exhibit these risk indicators are not given the assistance they need. They are ritualistically processed through a series of routine courses--watered-down academics like "general math" or watered-down shop courses that teach students to use outmoded equipment. In a typical pattern, students routinely skip, disrupt or fail these classes before ultimately dropping out.

More appropriate educational alternatives exist. These include: 1) alternative schools, which usually have small classes where students can be treated on an individual basis and simultaneously feel they are part of a little community; 2) alternative educational programs, such as those that integrate remedial reading, writing and mathematics instruction into all subjects; and 3) work/study options, in which the curriculum is closely related to the skills students need on the job. The effectiveness of these alternatives at holding students in school and improving their academic achievement has been demonstrated. However, relatively few schools give priority to developing such alternatives and fewer are held accountable for doing so.

Furthermore, laws intended to increase academic requirements and standards that were recently passed in many states appear to have had the unintended consequence of making it more difficult for schools to provide such alternatives. For example, mandating an extra year of algebra is of no benefit to a student who cannot perform long division. School re-reform may be needed in many states to undo the unintended negative consequences of such laws on at-risk youth. States must also provide positive incentives or absolute requirements for schools to develop more effective and appropriate education for these students.

3) Year-Round Programming Sequences

While most youth are academically able to afford a summer vacation from formal learning, evidence suggests that at-risk

youth are not. A number of studies have shown that disadvantaged youth typically suffer a sizable learning loss, as measured by test scores, over the summer months.[18] While in school, these students' reading and mathematics skills develop at a satisfactory pace, but much of this development is lost over in the summer. This process of "two steps forward, one step back" may account for a substantial portion of the achievement gap that exists between low-income youth and their middle-class peers.

For youth already in danger of failing, the traditional methods of teaching that are found in most summer school programs may be insufficient. In a major multisite demonstration with carefully controlled research, Public/Private Ventures found that the combination of a summer job and a minimum of 90 hours of specially designed, skills-based remedial education resulted in an average gain of .6 of a grade in reading and .8 of a grade in mathematics for 14- and 15-year-old students who had tested several grades behind their age group.[19]

Developing cooperation between school systems and summer employment programs in providing summer remediation to disadvantaged youth is fairly simple. In most communities, remediation programs can be started using existing resources, such as summer school funds and summer youth employment funds. If done well, summer remediation programs produce unusually strong and clear benefits to youth.

4) Increased capacity for providing basic academic skills and/or GED programs for out-of-school youth

Adequate basic skills are a prerequisite for most entry-level jobs and training programs. Their absence is also a significant barrier to participation in JTPA programs. Even in the less selective days of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), academic level could be strongly correlated with successful completion of training.[20] Since the duration of training is highly correlated with successful outcomes, it is critical

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[18] See, for example, Barbara Heyns, **Summer Learning and the Effects of Schooling**. New York: Academic Press, 1978; and, Jane David and Sol Pelavin, "Secondary Analysis: In Compensatory Education Programs," **New Directions for Program Evaluation**, Vol. 4, 1978, pp. 31-44.

[19] Cynthia L. Sipe, Jean Baldwin Grossman and Julita A. Milliner, **Summer Training and Education Program (STEP)**. Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures, 1987.

[20] Robert Taggart, **A Fisherman's Guide: An Assessment of Training and Remediation Strategies**. Kalamazoo, Michigan: W. E. Upjohn Institute, 1981.

that employment and training programs, whether supported by JTPA or state welfare agencies, build in the educational services that participants need to persevere in the program.

Providing additional funding for adult basic education that ties basic skills instruction to entrance into training programs or jobs is one way to address this widespread need. Implementing second-chance educational programs for dropouts, in which basic state education support is provided to an individual until a diploma is obtained or a certain age or time limit is reached is another. This approach, which is being used to fund low-cost, results-oriented alternative schooling for dropouts in Colorado and Oregon, has the virtue of being built on existing legislation and involves the schools in identification of eligible youth while permitting flexible arrangements for service provision.

5) Development of the institutional capacity to provide comprehensive services to out-of-school youth

In most communities, efforts to provide coordinated education, employment and human services for at-risk youth--including those in the justice system, on welfare or on the streets--are hampered by the lack of a focal point for organizing such services. As the profiles of existing state programs in this report will illustrate, the organizing role can be assumed by the schools themselves or by state and/or local bodies specifically created for that purpose. Private Industry Councils (PICs), community colleges, community action agencies, and regional vocational/technical schools are among other institutions that might serve as the "hub" for coordinated local services if given stimulus by state government to do so.

6) Establishment of An Effective State-level Coordination Mechanism

Establishing a coordination mechanism at the state level is easier said than done, and attempts to develop such a mechanism frequently fail. Still, it is critical that a state-level body composed of agency and legislative representatives, as well as representatives from other concerned institutions, be established to oversee and implement systematic management of existing resources. A key to this body's success is that it accomplish something beyond simply producing a report. As will be shown in a discussion of the Oregon initiative, requiring financial contributions from each agency to support local coordinated efforts is an excellent way to establish the seriousness of a practical effort at an early stage.

The established body must be seen as a creature of no one agency or it will quickly lose its credibility. The use of personnel from outside the represented agencies, therefore, is critical to the success of the coordination's effort.

7. Creating Incentives and Leveraging Techniques

States do not usually have full control of resources used for local services and programming for youth. Their discretion is often limited in comparison to the gross dollars they administer; how limited depends on the particular legislation. But despite these limitations, states may still have considerable influence. In JTPA, for example, states can use 6 percent of total funds for incentives and technical assistance and 8 percent to improve ties with the education system. States are also responsible for enforcement, i.e., ensuring that at least 40 percent of JTPA's dollars are spent on youth and an equitable share is spent on dropouts. This is hardly total control, but it is also not insignificant.

States must develop creative incentives and leveraging techniques to ensure that local jurisdictions commit additional resources to state-initiated efforts to assist at-risk youth. These resources can be used to both enrich and broaden the effect of the effort and will also ensure that local participation and interest are based on more than securing additional funds. Specific state efforts discussed in the next section will provide examples of creative use of incentives and leveraging.

8) Encouragement of Local Creativity within Purposeful Guidelines.

There has been a lengthy, ongoing debate among experts concerning the relative merits of providing funds for localities to address certain problems in whatever way they feel will be prudent as opposed to providing funds with clear directions on how localities must spend them. The most effective approach appears to lie between these two positions, with the exact solution dependent on the nature of the problem being addressed and what is known about it. For example, if certain remediation instructional packages are credibly proven to be more effective than others, it makes little sense for a state not to provide greater funds, direction and training for use of those packages. Similarly, if research indicates that a certain indicator, such as being two grades behind in testing, is a powerful predictor of dropout behavior, it is sensible for the state to direct use of discretionary funds toward addressing that indicator. If, on the other hand, the state's goal is to increase programming for a group of youth about whom little is known, such as homeless teenagers, a wiser course would be to provide funds that can be used to inspire local creativity in new programming.

In short, the degree of direction given by the state to localities should depend on the certainty and specificity of purpose, based on reliable information. The following sections illustrate that some states have been able to exercise very wise judgment in calculating the optimum degree of control.

EXPERIENCE

Oregon, California, Connecticut and Massachusetts are four states whose experiences illustrate the diverse paths through which states can develop initiatives for at-risk youth, the pros and cons of the different options and some promising outcomes. In this section, we will briefly summarize the experiences of these states and discuss their implications for other state youth initiatives. Other states, of course, have undertaken effective and instructive initiatives. Our choices are intended not to be comprehensive, but to illustrate the major strategic choices.

Oregon

In 1983, P/PV sought and identified three states that were able and willing to meet criteria for participation in its SEIY demonstration, which was designed to advance the process of initiating and implementing successful state youth initiatives. The criteria were that the governor and chief state school officer both sign off on participation and that the governor agree to designate a Youth Coordinating Council (YCC), an interagency mechanism composed of senior officials from state education, job training and human service agencies. YCCs were expected to provide forums for exchanging information and developing cooperative relationships among state agencies and were also charged with setting priorities and developing coordinated services for at-risk youth in selected communities. Each YCC was allocated a small funding pool ($400,000 to $500,000 a year from existing discretionary sources) as seed money for improvements to local systems and programs for serving at-risk youth. Foundation funds provided each state with enough money to hire a director for the YCC, but the demonstration was designed to make better use of current resources and, for the most part, was mounted without benefit of new appropriations or grants.

In addition to designing the demonstration and evaluating its effectiveness, P/PV played an active role in helping states establish YCCs and provided advice and technical assistance to state teams as their activities proceeded. An unusual feature of this demonstration was that each YCC coordinator was an employee of P/PV--at least initially. This arrangement was intended to ensure the neutrality of the coordinators and enhance their effectiveness in developing and brokering cooperative arrangements.

Oregon was one of the three states that participated in the SEIY demonstration. Within three years, Oregon's youth initiative evolved from modest support for new local programming to a major, well-funded program that has gubernatorial support and substantial impact on programming and policy decisions in several state agencies.

Oregon has a strong tradition of local control and its YCC, under the leadership of a county commissioner, initially emphasized identification of local needs and the crafting of desirable responses to those needs from state agencies, notably the Department of Education, the Department of Human Services and the Department of Community Development and Training--all of which had representatives on the YCC. After a series of local forums, a determination of state priorities and an assessment of which program models had been proved effective, the YCC issued a request for proposals (RFP), which was funded by $400,000 in combined JTPA 8 percent dollars and Vocational Education Act funds for disadvantaged youth. The RFP solicited proposals for local collaborative approaches to serving at-risk youth. Localities were required to match state funding, with the understanding that they would assume full funding responsibility for programs they wished to continue beyond two years.

The YCC supported a number of innovative and effective local programming activities. Bolstered by program success, the scope of its activities and its budget both expanded rapidly. Interaction with local officials identified critical service and policy issues to which the state had hitherto paid little attention--most notably, the growing problem of teenage parenting. In many instances, local officials identified state regulations and requirements that hindered effective coordinated service delivery. The YCC provided a forum to bring such issues to the attention of top policymakers, so changes could be made. When the state decided to "downsize" its juvenile justice facilities, the YCC provided seed money so that several localities could organize community-based services for deinstitutionalized youth.

The director of the YCC uncovered an obscure provision of the state school code that allows basic state education grants to be channeled to alternative education providers for the education of dropouts, with the approval of local school boards. This provision funded "second-chance" education and training programs for dropouts referred by the Portland school district. Basic education dollars follow these youth until they receive a degree or reach the age of 21. In a rural area, Clackamas Community College used basic education funds to provide flexible "open-entry, open-exit" vocational education to dropouts and high school students from a consortium of 12 school districts. This program allowed youth to combine vocational training with work experience, attendance at a local high school or participation in alternative education programs.

In short, the YCC proved to be a flexible and effective way to pool state and local resources for coordination of critically needed services for at-risk youth. By increasing dialogue between state and local officials, it also helped raise broader

questions of policy that in turn received serious consideration from top officials of agencies with representatives on the YCC.

Funds available to the YCC for interagency initiatives from discretionary sources increased in the second year and in early 1987, the YCC received strong support from newly elected Governor Goldschmidt as well as a two-year, $7.5 million appropriation from the state legislature to continue its work.

In addition, the YCC was at least partially responsible for a significant new emphasis on at-risk youth in the Departments of Education and Human Services, with the following results:

- The Department of Education made improving the education of "at-risk" youth one of its top priorities for 1987, and is developing plans to require all local systems to identify at-risk youth early and establish appropriate programs to meet their needs.

- The Department of Human Services has given high priority to the issue of a teenage pregnancy, resulting in a variety of divisional initiatives that use existing resources and an $8.6 million budget request for additional programs to combat teenage pregnancy and assist teenage parents.

- Education and Human Services have planned a $25 million joint initiative that builds in part on YCC demonstration activities. If funded by the legislature, it will provide comprehensive education, health and human services to a variety of at-risk youth in and out of school, with the YCC having a strong role in its implementation.

The Oregon approach has not only produced concrete and effective programming for at-risk youth, but has also brought about state-level interagency cooperation that should provide a durable base for future initiatives. The YCC's success in better utilizing existing funds has encouraged the legislature to set aside additional funds to expand the state's efforts on behalf of at-risk youth.

California

Oregon began its sizeable youth initiative through formation of a YCC to control a modest amount of existing discretionary funds. While its initiative is somewhat narrower in purpose, California developed a major program to serve dropouts and potential dropouts through legislative action that was part and parcel of the state's recent education reforms.

Through SB 65 ("School-Based Pupil Motivation and Maintenance Program and Dropout Recovery Act"), California has instituted one of the largest and, arguably, most sophisticated state policy initiatives for dropout prevention. Total funding actually provided under SB 65 ($12.6 million) seems modest when the size of California and its statewide school attrition rate of nearly 30 percent are considered, but mechanisms in the legislation allowed leveraging of nearly $100 million from other sources in the program's first year alone.

While SB 65 funds alternative education/employment programs for dropout recovery, most of its funds provide grants of $6,000 to middle and high schools and $4,000 to elementary schools for planning school-based programs to increase "holding power." These grants are reserved for schools in districts with high attrition rates (over 36 percent), whose plans must be approved by a school-site council whose members include parents and teachers and by the local school board. Rather than creating add-on programs, school plans are expected to attempt fundamental improvements in school effectiveness, with an emphasis on improving the achievement and attendance of at-risk youth. Plans are expected to involve community-based organizations and other local service providers in coordinating resources at the school level. Schools whose plans are approved receive $40,000 to hire an outreach coordinator whose duties include working with these organizations.

The most ingenious feature of the bill, however, is its use of deregulation as an incentive for better coordination of educational services. California allocates more than $1 billion annually in an array of categorical education programs; SB 65 provides for waiving the regulations governing these funds if they are used to improve holding power. Thus far, more than $100 million of the categorical funds have been folded into dropout prevention programs.[21]

In addition to these incentives for basic institutional improvement, California has assembled an inventory of 50 "model" programs for at-risk youth and offers small grants of up to $10,000 to SB 65 schools agreeing to replicate them. JTPA 8 percent funds support a portion of this activity and sign-off is required by local Private Industry Councils.

In effect, California is betting very heavily on a highly decentralized approach by literally and figuratively putting its money behind the individual school and primarily playing the role of catalyst. Interagency coordination at the state level is

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[21]October 7, 1987, interview with Raymond G. Eberhard, Manager, **High Risk Youth Unit**, California State Department of Education.

currently limited to involvement of the state Job Training Coordinating Council, which oversees JTPA. This may ultimately limit the ability of some localities to coordinate other services with the schools. However, in a state as large as California, simply coordinating the many categorical education programs is a feat, which makes the effort to use deregulation as an incentive for better coordination at the school level particularly intriguing.

While California's program is conceptually appealing, its effectiveness remains to be seen. According to the program's manager, the major early problems have been resistance at some school sites from personnel associated with categorical programs and a tendency among some school-site councils to treat SB 65 like one more categorical effort. These councils are devoting little beyond lip service to the concept of making school retention an integral part of school improvement efforts. Furthermore, while the program offers carrots, there is no apparent stick, i.e., no firm performance standards schools must meet to retain exemption from categorical regulations.

The program is being evaluated under terms of a "sunset" provision in the legislation. If it achieves its promise, it will be an outstanding example of a program where measured output rather than compliance with regulations has been used as a barometer of whether it fulfills legislative intent.

Connecticut

Connecticut's initiative for at-risk youth, Jobs for Connecticut's Youth (JCY), was begun in 1981 with the help of a foundation grant and technical assistance from P/PV. A precursor of P/PV's SEIY demonstration, JCY was initiated with strong personal backing from then-education commissioner Mark R. Shedd. As initially conceived, the program was to encompass both state- and local-level interagency and public/private cooperation. In reality, however, most cooperation has taken place at the local level.

JCY began operation with a substantial two-year grant from The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. These funds--which were subsequently combined with Vocational Education Act funding for the disadvantaged, a portion of the JTPA 8 percent grants and modest legislative appropriations--were used primarily as incentives for improving local service systems through coordinated planning and programming. The goal was to improve local decision-making and support exemplary programs that would serve as building blocks for better service delivery. To qualify for JCY support, localities were required to assemble "Area Action Teams" (AATs), which included representatives of local school districts, PICs, the private sector and community-based organizations. These teams were charged with assessing the needs of at-risk youth and

developing plans to address them, primarily through coordinated services.

JCY is administered by the State Department of Education's Office of Career and Vocational Education. This office provides a staff member for each AAT and supplies program funding that the locality must match. Although JCY has received backing from the governor and the state legislature in the form of modest appropriations, it has not become the major interagency initiative its framers envisioned.

However, the program has had significant effects on local programming. In three of the five areas of the state in which JCY operates (two of the four urban areas and the sole rural area), local teams now function as important generators and coordinators of services for at-risk youth. The teams have been particularly effective in improving coordination between schools and PICs, and they have the power to review all 8 percent proposals. Conversely, the PICs have been empowered by the state Department of Education to review and approve all AAT plans. This process of cross-agency reviewing helped institutionalize the AAT process; more important, it helped bring coherence to local services and spawned effective new programs. In its first three years, 7,370 at-risk youth were served by JCY-initiated programs. The following programs were among those initiated by JCY teams in the four active areas in Connecticut:

- Follow-up services by the Bridgeport Public Schools and Business/Industry Council for participants in the summer jobs program. Through case management, youth are given education, training and support intended to help them stay in school and develop a higher level of competency.

- A business organization in New Haven provides after-school, for-credit training in office skills and job-readiness for seniors identified as being at risk.

- Hartford's School/Business Collaborative, a Chamber of Commerce venture, provides employment specialists who help at-risk seniors develop career plans, teach job-readiness skills and gain placement in entry-level jobs or training programs after graduation.

- In the rural Windham area, a comprehensive system of services is being operated by a community action agency. The objective is to prepare severely at-risk students for entry into JTPA programs.

Massachusetts

Massachusetts was also a participant in P/PV's SEIY demonstration. Like Oregon, it formed a YCC with an initial focus on stimulating integrated local service delivery systems through an RFP process that combined JTPA 8 percent funds and state education dollars. The YCC produced some significant results; for example, in the Berkshire region of rural Western Massachusetts, a "Competency Coalition Compact" was formed by 36 education, employment and human service agencies. Third-party evaluators found this to be "a viable and energetic organizational entity" that "significantly broadened the range of referrals available when clients come into contact with a specific agency" and created better agency staff awareness of the range of available services.[22]

In its second year, the Massachusetts YCC shifted its emphasis from local programming to better planning and coordination--a particular concern of middle-level managers in a state with a rich (and sometimes bewildering) array of human services. Monthly council meetings were attended fairly regularly by representatives of the Departments of Labor, Education, Social Services, Employment Services, Youth Services and Mental Health, as well as the Board of Regents and the Governor's Office of Education. Regular information exchange, heightened sensitivity to the need for collaborative services for at-risk youth and an increased focus on dropout prevention were among the broad outcomes of the process. More specific outcomes included:

- A decision to apply the same priorities and criteria in awarding both JTPA 8 percent funds and vocational education funds for the disadvantaged;

- A decision to require that local PICs submit a consolidated application for 8 percent funds rather than a smattering of discrete program proposals, with PICs serving as the focal point for planning education and employment services for at-risk youth in each community;

- Development of interagency peer-to-peer technical assistance and consultation, allowing agencies to share expertise rather than reinvent the wheel;

- Informal interagency review of agency plans and grant awards; and

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[22]David Gruber and Frazierita Davidson, **State Employment Initiatives for Youth: An Assessment of the Demonstration.** Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures, 1986, p. 28.

- Interagency contracts for service delivery that build on existing capacity and knowledge, eliminating the need for agencies to develop separate delivery systems for similar services.

The accomplishments of Massachusetts' YCC have been significant and durable. In a state with a tradition of high-powered and turf-minded agencies, the YCC has met the need for information-sharing and programmatic cooperation, particularly among middle managers. It has also successfully used incentives and leveraging techniques to increase local coordination and funding for at-risk youth.

LESSONS FROM EXPERIENCE: THE SUCCESS

The states that we focused on have had great success in improving the management and delivery of services to at-risk youth. There is clear evidence that coordination through such vehicles as the YCCs in Oregon and Massachusetts is viable and valuable at both the state and local level. Experience in these two states illustrates how relatively small amounts of seed money, obtained either through new legislative appropriations or by pooling existing funds, can be used to stimulate and leverage far larger allocations of resources in order to build coherent programs for at-risk youth. In both Oregon and Massachusetts, the YCC required not only a local matching of state funds but also that localities eventually assume full operating costs. In effect, discretionary dollars were used as a revolving fund to capitalize the start-up of new programming capacities. In addition, resources from diverse state and federal discretionary sources were merged and managed as part of a comprehensive strategy; state incentives produced new programs and new institutional relationships at the local level; and state/local interaction improved not only local programming, but state policy as well.

The California and Oregon experiences illustrate additional creative programming mechanisms with potential for facilitating major institutional improvements. For example, California's use of deregulation as an incentive for making changes aimed at reducing dropout rates and Oregon's use of basic state education grants to fund second-chance educational programs for dropouts both show signs of long-term effectiveness.

At the local level, these two states have demonstrated creative responses to the five key programming needs identified earlier. Efforts to improve the capacity of basic institutions to serve at-risk youth include California's plan to lodge dropout prevention within the framework of basic school improvement and Oregon's use of JTPA, Vocational Education and basic education grant funds to support community-based services to youth released during the "downsizing" of juvenile justice facilities. Coordinated social service delivery at the school-site level and

linkages between summer employment and school-year education and employment activities were achieved in a number of local programs. Oregon developed local second-chance educational programs funded by state education grants (a mechanism also being used in Colorado) to improve basic skills of dropouts; the use of the Private Industry Council to run such programs in Portland afforded a close linkage between education and job training and placement.

In addition, Massachusetts and Connecticut, through interagency compacts, showed how comprehensive education, employment and human service networks can be established to serve youth in rural areas. Formal processes for joint local review of plans to spend JTPA youth dollars and JCY education dollars in Connecticut and similar provisions in California helped strengthen linkages between systems at the local level.

It should be stressed that the driving force behind state initiatives has largely been middle management. There are inherent limits on the time and interest of cabinet-level state officials. Lacking strong personal commitment or a powerful mandate from the governor or state legislature, such officials are unlikely to devote much attention to programs for which they receive little recognition and that serve a relatively small and powerless constituency (at-risk youth). However, middle managers in charge of youth programs often benefit professionally from interagency collaboration, even if that benefit is limited to information sharing. In Oregon and Massachusetts, in particular, middle managers found positive programmatic benefits from pooling resources and expertise across agencies and gained allies from other agencies and localities with whom they could raise larger policy questions.

Finally, implementation appears to be facilitated by the presence of a neutral convener or "broker" to help put the collaborative mechanism together and keep it working. In the turf-conscious world of government, it is helpful to have a party at the table whose sole concern is assuring parity of relationship and mutuality of benefit--the glue that holds collaboration together. The role of facilitator is a commonly found in private sector activities--from development projects to joint ventures. It is less familiar in the compartmentalized world of public administration, where its potential value for addressing complex problems that do not fall neatly with any one entity's mandate is only now being realized.

LESSONS FROM EXPERIENCE: PROBLEMS

The optimism engendered by the positive aspects of the state experiences we have described must be tempered by an appreciation of the limitations and the obstacles states face in developing programs for at-risk youth. To begin with, efforts like the ones

we described are currently found in only a few states and are modest in both scale and accomplishments--especially in relation to the severity of the problem. Neither at-risk youth nor their families represent a cogent political force; thus, there are few short-term political rewards for serving them. It took P/PV more than six months to find three states in which both the governor and the chief state school officer were willing to make the very modest commitments of time and money required to join the demonstration. Therefore, the states in the demonstration are not representative. While larger infusions of foundation funds into state treasuries may have attracted greater interest, the limited response is a political barometer. Despite signs of increased concern, whether a political consensus on the importance of the issue will emerge remains uncertain.

While small initiatives offer a practical first step, they are also subject to "the program trap." Oregon's efforts evolved from a set of programs into a major strategy, but JCY in Connecticut remained small, meeting with limited success in competing for the attention of state policy-makers with other initiatives, such as the Governor's Jobs for Connecticut's Future and a new education commissioner's dropout prevention initiative. There were times when the number of competing initiatives in Connecticut gave rise to the largely unanswered question "who is coordinating the coordinators?," a question that is commonly heard in jurisdictions without an overall coordinating body like a YCC.

Also, no state was by any means able to completely overcome structural barriers, interagency rivalries or traditions of state/local antagonism. South Carolina, for example, has a unique governmental structure: legislative commissions oversee various state agencies, resulting in a weak executive branch. This structure effectively negated cooperative efforts initiated by the governor.

No state was able to conduct a thorough, incisive, data-based analysis of youth. This was a result not only of fragmented information systems and short time frames but also of the occasional reluctance of agencies to share information on problems and resources.

Local hostility to state intervention, which could be traced to causes that varied from custom to specific political conflicts, was overcome in many instances. However, such hostility did limit the number of localities that responded with enthusiasm to state incentives. In small initiatives, the problems of less than rigorous needs assessment and less than universal local participation can be easily finessed; there are enough problems apparent to all and enough responsive communities to go around. But as scale and stakes increase, these difficulties become more serious.

Finally, coordination itself has a hidden cost. The pressures of crisis management that coordination presents require investments of time and planning efforts above and beyond the current duties of most staff. In the absence of either clear measures of improved service delivery or tangible rewards, even those who are not "turf-conscious" may be reluctant to make such investments on a continuing basis. Inasmuch as coordinative strategies are, in fact, efforts to put together again a Humpty Dumpty of fragments created by imperfect laws, regulations and administrative structures, one can argue in support of more radical measures, such as block grants, new laws and regulatory reform. However difficult to achieve in the short term, these measures may be more likely to succeed in the long run.

Barriers to effective youth service are not likely to disappear; any state youth initiative will be forced to come to grips with them. However, experience to date suggests that the barriers are not insurmountable; the key is to focus all parties' attention on the ultimate goal, using each experience as a building block for the next step.

IV. THE WORK AHEAD

For the foreseeable future, state governments will hold the key to improving systems and services for at-risk youth. Other agencies will continue to play a role. Some local governments have undertaken effective initiatives on their own and will no doubt continue to do so. Some federal agencies have begun to promote coordinated services for youth through demonstration projects, competitive grants or regulations governing use of categorical funds, a trend that is also likely to continue. Furthermore, macroeconomic policy, welfare, and employment and training policies, all of which fall largely within the federal domain, create much of the context in which state policies operate. However, the best chance for sustained, coordinated and widely implemented policies and initiatives to effectively serve at-risk youth lies with state governments. State agencies either directly control a broad spectrum of resources potentially applicable to youth at risk or can exert influence on the agencies that do; they are the fulcrum for youth programming.

By adhering to a few key principles and techniques, it is possible for states to take leadership and show effectiveness over a relatively brief period of time--without waiting for new funds or vast overhauls of existing systems. These principles and techniques played major roles in the relatively modest state initiatives reviewed in this paper, which should serve as guideposts for more ambitious state efforts. It should be clear that the promising starts we have seen in Oregon, California, Massachusetts and Connecticut are just that: starts. For states to achieve their full potential in serving at-risk youth, both the scale and sophistication of efforts must be increased exponentially.

For such an advancement to occur, governors, chief state school officers, other members of the executive branch and concerned legislators must provide strong and sustained leadership. Leadership is needed to develop appropriate responses to the sizable problems at-risk youth now face, whether through reprogramming of existing resources or the addition of new ones. This will entail not simply rethinking the use of a few million dollars in discretionary funds, but considering use of the billions of dollars that currently fund programs that are entirely or partly targeted toward at-risk youth. Leadership must also have the staying power and commitment necessary to address the needs for better basic data and data reporting, better needs assessment, and better assessment of the use of funds; to develop a thorough inventory of resources available in each state to serve at-risk youth; and to design and implement rules and procedures that can effectively redirect resources. Leadership must focus sustained attention on how well basic

institutions serve at-risk youth; it will take time to build the systems, habits and management strategies needed to allow cooperative planning and programming at both the state and local levels.

The challenges are formidable. But the potential benefits are vast and the cost of inaction may be even greater.